

Community Culture & Design

8

Introduction

Helena enjoys many cultural assets, including a rich local history, architecture, visual and performing arts, libraries, education and recreational opportunities. These assets are city-wide, for all age groups, abilities, and income levels, and consist of City and private ventures. Most, if not all of these assets are unique to Helena in qualitative ways, shaped over time by economic conditions, physical context and localized, social values – things loosely gathered, for purposes of this plan and this chapter, under the terms “culture” and “design.” These things contribute to the attractiveness of the city; they foster community pride and its sense of identity; they demonstrate the long-term faith and optimism among residents – both past and present – regarding future of Helena. This chapter provides an overview of Helena’s history and its cultural assets, introduces and affirms the community’s design values as related to City activities, and presents culture and design-oriented goals and objectives.

The Cultural Assets map (Figure 8.01) shows the locations of the larger cultural sites throughout the Helena area.

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Helena's Historic Resources

Cities find part of their identity in their architecture – especially their historic architecture – their people, social organizations, parks, educational facilities, and other cultural amenities. Helena is no exception, and to a considerable degree the community's history contributes to its sense of place. Visitors are encouraged to appreciate Helena's past and the physical setting created by older neighborhoods and commercial areas that serve as an inducement to shopping, dining, and entertainment.

Helena is fortunate to have many historic assets that tell the story of the area, beginning with its earlier indigenous peoples and Native American heritage to the multi-cultural City of today. This story continues today with museums and the arts, and the preservation of numerous designated historic buildings and historic districts, as well as other potentially historic neighborhoods.

Facilities

Helena's historic downtown serves as an outdoor facility for the many concerts, festivals, and craft fairs that take place throughout the year and a farmers market that occurs during the warmer months.

Cultural facilities are concentrated in the downtown area, with the library and the neighborhood center at the south end and the Civic Center, Grandstreet Theatre, Holter Art Museum, and Myrna Loy Center in the middle – in addition to several small private art galleries. Historic public structures downtown include the Guardian of the Gulch Fire Tower, the City-County Building, and the County Courthouse. The Helena Indian Alliance, a private organization dedicated to the education, cultural preservation, and health care of Native Americans, is located nearby along US 12 and Madison Avenue.

Civic Center

The City of Helena owns the Civic Center, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City manages the use of the Civic Center in the following and other ways:

- Coordinates all capital improvements;
- Works with the Civic Center Board of Directors for fundraising and grant applications;
- Promotes the facility as a community cultural asset.

Marketing activities include an ongoing program to recruit in-state and out-of-state organizations to bring conventions, expositions, and conferences to the Helena Civic Center, and to encourage local clubs and organizations to use the Civic Center ballroom and auditorium for community events. In addition, a coordinated effort with performing arts

organizations has been successful in bringing additional performances to the Civic Center auditorium facility. A variety of public and private funding sources has been utilized by the Civic Center to address various repair, improvement, safety, and accessibility issues.

Montana Heritage Center

In 2019, the Montana Senate created the Montana Museums Act, granting the construction of a new heritage center in Helena, as well as creating an historic preservation grant program, and an assortment of preservation tax initiatives.¹ The new Montana Heritage Center will include museum exhibits; educational and event space; an outdoor courtyard and amphitheater; museum storage; a research center and library, as well as much needed classrooms for educational programs. The facility will also house the Montana State Historical Society.

Helena is also home to several other museums representing local and statewide history, science, and art, including:

- Montana WILD Outdoor Education Center (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks)
- Montana Military Museum;
- The Original Governor's Mansion;
- Reeder's Alley & Pioneer Cabin;
- Exploration Works;
- The Holter Museum of Art.

¹ Montana MT SB338, passed 2019-05-20.



Figure 8.01 – Helena's rich history is expressed in a multitude of ways, including architecture and urban design unique to the city's place and local resources. (Image: SCJ Alliance, Inc.)

Historic Districts

Historic districts contain a grouping of structures that relate to each other within a certain historic context. Typically, such groupings share a common time-frame or set of events leading to their development, may include unique architectural features, or exhibit the work of a master architect or builder. Districts may also include structures that are not of the same era and significance.²

There are a variety of designated historic districts in Helena and in the Urban Standards Boundary, including the following:

- **Helena Historic District** – Originally established in 1972, the commercial portion of this district contains 25 primary properties, 57 contributing properties, and 39 noncontributing properties. The Courthouse Square and Rodney Street Neighborhood portion of the district includes nine primary properties, 49 contributing, and 17 noncontributing properties;
- **Helena South-Central Historic District** – Established in 1986, this district contains 168 contributing properties and 52 noncontributing properties;
- **Helena West Main Street Historic District** – Listed in 1996, this area contains one primary property, 20 contributing, and 16 noncontributing properties;
- **House of the Good Shepherd Historic District Area** – A small district listed in 1993 containing four properties, located south of Ninth Avenue on both sides of Hoback Street;
- **Mount Helena Historic District** – Was listed in 1997 as Helena’s first cultural landscape. This district follows the original boundaries of Mount Helena Park and contains 680 acres;
- **Helena Depot Historic District** – Listed in 2004, consisting of the commercial area adjacent to and including the former Northern Pacific depot;
- **Montana State Capitol Campus Historic District** – Listed in 2016, this 60-acre area includes 15 contributing buildings – three of which are individually listed – plus three contributing sites and nine contributing objects. The capitol building is the centerpiece of the campus, where the cornerstone was placed in 1899;
- **Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District** – Listed in 2017 and consisting of two contributing buildings and one

² For more information about listing a historic property on the National Register, contact the Helena/Lewis and Clark County historic preservation commission or the state historic preservation office.

noncontributing building. The modernist style building complex has housed commission operations since 1958;

- **Lewis & Clark County Hospital Historic District** – Located north of the city limits, and established in 2002;
- **Montana State Fairgrounds Racetrack** – Located along the northern boundary of the city and established in 2006.
- **Fort Harrison Veteran's Hospital Historic District** – Located two miles northwest of Helena, and established in 2016;
- **Western Clay Manufacturing Company Historic District** – Located just west of city limits, and established in 2017.

Much of central Helena is eligible for Historic District listing, although only a portion is currently recognized. Other, non-listed historic neighborhoods in the city include:

- The area generally located east of Davis Street and west of Montana Avenue from the southern City limits northward to Prospect Avenue;
- The area located south of Lyndale Avenue between Rodney Street and Last Chance Gulch;
- The area generally located north of the railroad tracks between Montana Avenue and Lamborn;
- A large portion of the upper west side, south of Knight Street and east of Garfield Street.

Helena's historic districts are mapped and included in this chapter as Figure 8.02.

Individual Listings

Forty-two Helena area properties are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including three cemeteries (Benton Avenue, Home of Peace, and Forestvale) in addition to a variety of residential, commercial and public buildings. Recent properties added to the register include the Crump-Howard House, Dorsey Grocery and Residence (2017), the Haight-Bridgewater House (2014), the Huseby, John. H. House, Western Life Insurance Company Helena Branch Office and the Unemployment Compensation Building (2012).

Programs & Efforts

Prompted by past requirements linked to Federal Urban Renewal and other programs, the City inventoried its threatened historic architecture, registering them with the National Register of Historic Places for future management and care. Since the 1970s, large segments of the downtown and southern historic neighborhoods have been added to the register.

In 1989, the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County created a combined historic preservation program and established a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), charged with efforts including:

- Preserving and developing “the unique historical, governmental, and environmental qualities of the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County”;
- Integrating historic preservation into local, state, and federal planning and decision-making processes;
- Identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources within the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County.

In 2012, the HPC was reestablished as the Lewis and Clark County Heritage Tourism Council (HTC), comprised of seven volunteer members appointed by the City and County. In addition to the charges led by the HPC, the HTC works to encourage:

- Heritage tourism initiatives;
- Local protection of historic places through ordinance activities;
- Improved archival protection of valuable local documents;
- The establishment of traditional heritage offerings such as local museum displays not currently present in the area.

The HTC was a key player in advocating for and obtaining passage of the Montana Museums Act (described above).

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s roster of properties important in the history, architectural history, archeology, engineering and culture of the United States, including its states, regions, and its communities. The National Register includes buildings and structures, sites, objects, and districts. Listing on the National Register opens a variety of benefits to the property owner, but does not provide actual protection for properties unless such protection is adopted locally – as the City of Helena has done with its demolition review process.

Listing once implied grant assistance, but this is not presently the case. Commercial buildings may enjoy a 20% Investment Tax Credit on major improvements, provided restoration standards are met. Property owners may also participate in an historic sign program, federal and state income tax credits, and Helena’s tax abatement program.

State Historic Sign Program

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has a historic sign program for properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located within a historic district and contributing to the district. For a nominal fee, property owners are provided with a metal sign for installation on the structure or in the yard. These signs describe

the property's history, and greatly benefit tourists and residents alike by providing readily-accessible historic information and context.

Certified Local Government Program

Montana's SHPO partners with the National Park Service to certify local historic preservation programs and provide technical preservation assistance. Ten percent of federal funding for the SHPO goes to such communities, designated as Certified Local Governments (CLG). Currently, there are sixteen communities in Montana that participate as CLGs, including Lewis and Clark County. Typically, each CLG receives between \$1,000 and \$5,000 – depending on activity and federal allocation – to spend in ways that best assist local preservation needs.

Income Tax Credits

The most significant federal assistance for historic preservation is available to commercial rehabilitation. As with the tax abatement program (below), properties must either be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or be located within a historic district and contribute to the character of the district. Design review of the proposed rehabilitation, restoration, expansion, or (in some circumstances) new construction is required. Building modifications must be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and applications are reviewed through the SHPO.

Tax Abatement Program

Helena maintains a tax abatement program for the rehabilitation of historic structures and new structures in historic districts. To qualify, properties must either be individually listed on the National Register or contribute to the character of a declared historic district. Design review is required, either from a state or locally-appointed board, and construction must be consistent with Secretary of the Interior standards. The program provides owners property tax abatement for up to five years on qualifying improvements. Abatements are limited to 100% of the increase in taxable value caused by the work. Future alterations that detract from historic elements may trigger repayment and penalties.

Demolition Review

Historic districts consist of many individual structures that essentially tell a community's story. If too many alterations occur that damage the context and historic integrity of a district, de-listing may occur.

Because the loss of district designation may negatively affect owners of contributing buildings, and recognizing the importance of maintaining its historic districts, the City has adopted a demolition review process for historic buildings and districts.



Figure 8.02 – Though many structures were razed during "urban renewal" efforts in the 60s, survivors, such as the Grandstreet Theatre, provide significant aesthetic, functional and cultural value to Helena. (Image: SCJ Alliance, Inc.)

Publications

The City of Helena has developed design guidelines and other publications about Helena's early development and design, including:

- *Design Guidelines for Improvements in the Downtown Helena Historic District;*
- *Design Guidelines for Helena's Historic Neighborhoods;*
- *The Heart of Helena: A Historical Overview;*
- *The Heart of Helena: A Historical Tour (walking tour brochure);*
- *A Walking Tour of Helena's Historic Courthouse Square and Central Neighborhood (walking tour brochure).*

Historic Resource Opportunities

Prehistoric and historic resources affect our understanding of, and connection to, the land. Protected historic areas may also present opportunities through heritage or cultural tourism, aiding economic development. As such, the City of Helena works to encourage protection of historic and prehistoric resources through means including identification and evaluation, registration, education, and treatment.

Looking forward, the City may wish to expend its demolition review process to non- National Register

properties, helping address gaps in coverage on the west side and among numerous historic homes not yet recognized east of downtown and the courthouse area. The ordinance may also be revisited, considering ways to realize process efficiencies and possible design remedies should demolition be approved. State legislation supporting "heritage and cultural tourism", including development of promotional plans, grants

and assistance programs, also offers promise for Helena’s preservation efforts.³

Goals and objectives in this Growth Policy support efforts such as:

- Continuing public outreach, providing information, advice, and guidance to property owners for restoration, rehabilitation, landscaping, or maintenance of historic and potentially historic buildings or structures;
- Provision of design guidelines for historic properties, historic districts, and potentially eligible historic districts;
- Developing additional incentives to support the use and reuse of existing historic structures through maintenance, conservation, and rehabilitation, considering measures such as business improvement districts, tax increment financing, zoning and neighborhood planning;
- Preserving, rehabilitating, and developing existing housing stock with special attention to historic structures and historic areas;
- Maintaining City-owned historic public buildings in a manner consistent with the buildings’ historic integrity;
- Regular review and updates to implementing programs, codes and ordinances.

Helena Arts

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Visual & Performing Arts History

Entertainment during Helena’s early years ranged from the raucous and bawdy to elevated classics; from globally-recognized operatic productions to saloon follies. Since Helena’s gold-camp era, several theaters were usually in simultaneous operation, offering vaudeville and other popular professional productions as well as community theater, where various organizations provided consistent outlet for amateur thespians.

Intellectual and enthusiast clubs abounded. For example, the Current Topics Club, a women’s organization, endured for more than 50 years as a public provider of opinions and facts on current events. Mark Twain and Sarah Bernhardt were among the most remembered celebrities featured by Ming’s Opera House – the stage of which still exists in a building on Jackson Street. The Ming’s successor in prominence was the Marlow Theater, a Gibraltar-like edifice downtown that maneuvered through entertainment’s transitions only to fall to urban renewal in later years.

The city’s rail line brought many acts through on tour, including not only entertainment, but also lectures on topics of the day. Local theatric productions established roots that ultimately sustained the current Myrna

³ Montana Code Title 90-1-101 through 90-1-182.

Loy Center for the Performing Arts, the Grand Street Community Theater, and the active Civic Center programs. Helena supports a rich variety of productions including children's theater, national touring groups, a symphony, and innovative and provocative stage plays. Also active are the educational theater programs of Carroll College and the local elementary and secondary schools.

Early accounts describe an extensive array of musical venues and productions, ranging from small enthusiast groups to City-wide bands. Beginning in 1930, the Helena Symphony began captivating audiences with classical pieces, often joined by community choral and other vocal groups, and at times, church-sponsored performances.

Artists such as Charlie Russell worked in Helena in the early years, and a strong visual tradition developed in the City in the mid-twentieth century. The Archie Bray Foundation, built on the grounds of a historic brickyard, is internationally known for ceramic arts. A large number of painters of regional and national reputation have studios in the city, and Downtown Helena Inc. puts on art walks to showcase a diverse range of artwork.

Helena has a multitude of performing arts with five theater companies (including Carroll College). Numerous venues host live performances ranging from classical to folk, jazz, bluegrass, blues, rock, and punk. Musical events such as the "Symphony Under the Stars" and Alive at Five are long-standing, regular features of Helena's cultural scene.

Public Art

Programs

The City of Helena established its public art program in 1998, affirming that public art contributes directly to the quality of life in Helena by enhancing the image of the community and instilling a concern for beauty and good design. The Helena Public Art Committee (HPAC) is responsible for any visual work of art displayed on an ongoing basis on the interior or exterior of any City-owned facility; on any City-owned property; and on non-City property if the work of art is installed or financed (either wholly or in part) with City funds, City-received donations, or grants procured by the City. The HPAC is responsible for acquiring and placing publicly-owned or financed public art; securing additional funding for art acquisition, and maintenance of existing works, and documenting the location and history of public art pieces in the Helena area.

The public art program has begun to expand from specific art pieces to include programs. The successful family-oriented Chalk Up Helena! (sidewalk chalk art) began in 2008 with plans to continue annually. The expansion of the City's outdoor public art program is intended to increase public awareness, support sense of place, and recognize the economic benefits derived from these ventures.

Mural & Sculpture Installations

At the time of this update, City-owned sculptures include:

- *The Bullwacker (downtown);*
- *The Prospectors (downtown);*
- *Extra! Extra! (downtown)*
- *Helena Gateway (downtown);*
- *Bison at the Library (downtown);*
- *All of the Above, None of the Above (downtown);*
- *Standing Stones of Lazy Green (Helena Avenue by Helena Middle School);*
- *Take It Easy (traffic circle, Butte and Sanders)*

The City maintains an annual endowment fund to help maintain its sculptures.

Paintings by Bob Morgan and John W. Beauchamp are located in the City-County Building. Murals are located in the 6th Avenue parking garage, and in the Memorial Park Bandshell.

Public Art Opportunities

The Helena area receives significant economic benefits from the arts. The City has a substantial artist population that contributes economically to the total economic figures for Lewis and Clark County. A Montana Arts Council study concluded that the multiple impacts of the arts are a critical part of Montana's economy, and compares Helena's economic impact from the arts as close to Billings' in terms of total impact and tax revenue.⁴

In 2007, the City began a process to clarify Helena's unique identity, helping set the community apart from other arts-oriented communities (a.k.a. "branding.") This effort led to the slogan "The Best Little Art Town" for marketing purposes, generally adopted to reflect existing values as well as aspirational ones.

Goals and objectives in this Growth Policy support efforts such as:

- Integration of public art into the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and other building activities;
- Public art installations in places like traffic circles;
- Additional murals and other art forms in and around public buildings;
- Development of additional funding sources, including consideration of a percent for art program similar to those

⁴ "The Role of the Nonprofit Arts in Montana's Economy: Executive Summary and Key Findings"

adopted by Missoula, the State of Montana, and other cities across the nation;

- Incorporation of long-term maintenance funding with new installations.

Community Design

As noted in Chapter 7, Helena’s sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs into the indefinite future, using currently available technology and respecting other species’ need to survive and thrive. The concept of “sustainable” in turn relates to maintaining healthy and safe conditions for all.

Healthy and safe conditions depend upon a diverse of features and conditions, including:

- A consistent, solid economy;
- Ample land and natural resources;
- Age, income, educational and cultural diversity;
- Attainable, quality housing for all segments of the community;
- Well-organized, effective public services, including police and fire departments;
- Well-maintained, efficient infrastructure;
- Strong primary, secondary and adult educational systems;
- Stable, affordable energy supplies;
- Adequate recreation facilities;
- Clean air and water quality;
- A variety of arts and cultural activities;
- Efficient use of public funds;
- An attractive physical setting.

The above list, though comprehensive, is by no means complete – or sufficiently descriptive to convey what residents hope for their future. In brief, Helena’s future depends on a wide range of things that also require qualitative descriptions to implement, often involving thoughtful, deliberate design, but just as often, emerging from highly complex, “organic” social systems.

For instance, overall physical connectivity is an aspect of a healthy, livable community. But far more than simply providing connecting streets and sidewalks, connectivity gains value with “complete streets” that provide for all modes of transportation and facilitate the type of diverse, active, community-oriented land uses that improve health, assist energy

efficiency, maintain air quality, minimize noise, and provide a sense of place.

Public input expressed in this and in past Growth Policy updates has helped shape and advise community design issues on all fronts, sometimes advancing Helena's livability and aesthetic qualities, sometimes advancing (or preserving) real property values. The following paragraphs introduce several of the community culture and design-related objectives included at the end of this chapter.

Infill and Compact Design

The concept of mixed-use development is an important part of Helena's Growth Policy. If properly planned and developed, mixed-use areas will mature into quality neighborhoods that enjoy higher densities, a mix of activities, more transportation options, and convenient shopping and services. When combined with improved multi-modal transportation opportunities, mixed-use areas can reduce reliance on automobile travel and the need for costly street improvements while benefiting air quality, slowing sprawl, and providing a greater variety of housing types. Such areas, especially those identified as "Neighborhood Centers" in this plan, are seen as key to the community's long-term growth strategy.

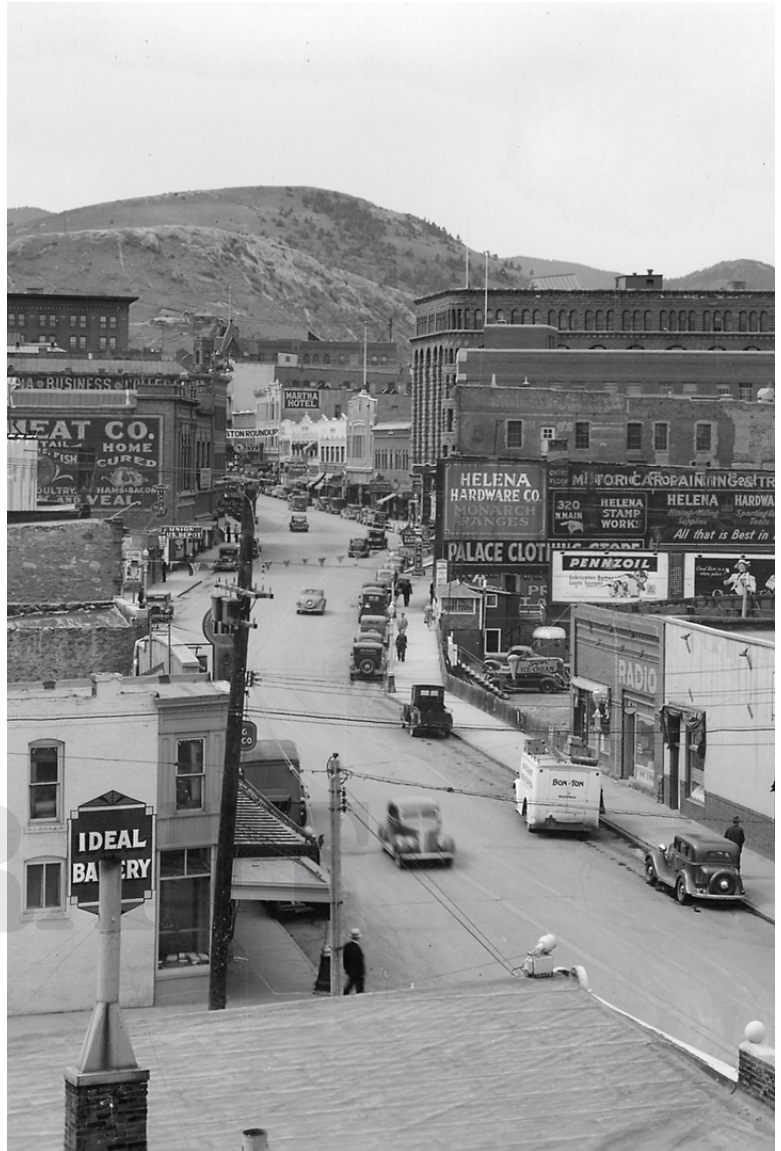


Figure 8.03 – More compact, centralized and easy to navigate patterns – much like those typical of Helena's past – are seen as sensible models for the City's future growth. (Image: *Helena as She Was*, www.helenahistory.org, courtesy of The David Poor Collection)

Subarea Planning

The 2018 *Downtown Neighborhood Plan & Downtown Urban Renewal Plan*, the 2015 *Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan*, the *Railroad Urban Renewal District Plan*, and other such plans seek to improve the artistic and commercial qualities of Helena, including multiple project concepts and recommendations. Over time, and as implemented, those recommendations may also inform how community design principles

may be applied to other areas, reinforcing core concepts and helping unify the city's overall look and feel. As noted above and elsewhere, one of this plan's key concepts envisions the emergence of Neighborhood Centers in several areas of Helena, some or all of which may recommend subarea-style plans be developed to guide their transformation.

Dark Skies

The ability to see the night sky is valued by many Helena's citizens. Helena's lighting ordinance was originally adopted in 2000 and revised in 2009, helping minimize direct glare source and "light trespass", reducing the effect lighting has on the night sky. This plan maintains support for such objectives, including improvements as technologies and opportunities provide.

Greenbelts

It's been a long-standing goal for Helena to realize a greenbelt concept that conserves and connects open space around the community – uniting parks, wildlife corridors, riparian areas and water bodies – while minimizing development impacts on open space. Greenbelts offer the opportunity to enhance trail networks as well, allowing non-motorized travel through much of the community for recreational or practical purposes. Support for greenbelt development is therefore included as an objective for parks planning, and to some degree, transportation planning.

Design Standards

Design standards also can help maintain the integrity of historic districts so that new construction blends into the district without negatively affecting the historic district designation. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide guidance for construction in historic districts. Design guidelines have been created by the Helena/Lewis and Clark County Historic Preservation Commission for two historic areas: The Downtown Helena Historic District, and Helena Historic Neighborhoods (on the upper west side or the "mansion area") and are a valuable resource for property owners. These guidelines are voluntary, but incentives could be used more actively to encourage using design standards with construction projects. Such incentives include public recognition programs and awards, neighborhood help with volunteers, the existing tax abatement, revolving loan funds or grants, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) -supported activities.

Objectives Summary

This Growth Strategy recognizes that much of residents prize – and what makes Helena an intensely beautiful, valued place – is associated with its people and life-long investments made over multiple generations. As such, this plan envisions ongoing support for a wide range of arts and cultural assets, educational and recreational opportunities, high

aesthetic standards, and preservation of the historic downtown as the spiritual "heart" of Helena. An engaged, fully-involved public is also seen as essential, enhancing not only decisions made over time, but also encouraging residents to become an active part of the community's culture – carrying forward a legacy of contributions made by those living here since people first arrived in the area.

Another key component of Helena's unique identity is its setting, offering breathtaking views and ready access to outdoor recreation. Therefore, this plan's goals and objectives support both preservation and sustainable access to parks and open space areas, retaining these as an essential part of the city's overall aesthetic.

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■ Community Culture Goals & Objectives

Goals

[G.04] Provide and support Helena’s parks and recreational opportunities on-pace with growth.

Discussion: Helena residents cherish current open space access, and parks and recreational services, and wish to retain the same or higher levels of service as the community grows. This goal directs the City to consider open space, parks and recreational needs in all related plans and actions, including land use decisions, regulatory requirements and budgeting.

[G.06] Protect and enhance the quality of Helena’s natural environment, conserving resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

Discussion: A hallmark of Helena is its mountainside setting, including forested hillside backdrop and open-space lands. In concert with other plan goals and policies directing growth, this goal supports the preservation of scenic and open space areas, urging creative employment of tools such as land trusts, rights-purchasing or exchanges, or other appropriate strategies.

[G.08] Sustain and expand Helena’s arts, cultural and civic environment, including visual and performing arts, historical assets, library and educational facilities, and recreational opportunities.

Discussion: Residents of Helena value and support the arts, cultural and social organizations, events and facilities. This goal and supporting objectives direct the City to encourage and expand community arts programming, historic and cultural resources – benefitting the civic health, quality of life, and economic vitality of Helena.

[G.09] Sustain the historic downtown as the “heart” of Helena, bringing the community together and enhancing its commercial, service and civic vitality.

Discussion: In preparing this plan, residents made it clear that the historic city center should still be considered the ‘heart’ of Helena. Maintaining a vibrant city center will require supporting its numerous and necessary functions, including a strong commercial base, community services, public space availability and access, parking and diverse housing options. This plan provides objectives and actions that help foster an environment in which the downtown can thrive, in turn aiding the attractiveness, efficiency and value of the entire community.

[G.10] Plan for and establish types and quantities of land uses in Helena supporting community needs, neighborhood centers, aesthetics and the City's long-term sustainability.

Discussion: Cities exercise considerable influence over land use, in turn influencing the type and character of development, patterns of growth, and the short and long-term financial impact of growth on the local economy. Consequently, this plan supports the allocation of land use types, supporting features and facilities sufficient to achieve overall plan objectives.

[G.12] Improve communication and outreach, involving the community in planning and decision-making for Helena.

Discussion: By intent, the development of this Growth Policy update has been community-driven, involving numerous residents including some representing groups of residents. For growth policy plans to succeed, community buy-in and support is critical. Future conditions will certainly require updates to the City's plans, objectives and actions, and this goal supports keeping residents highly involved in such work.

[G.13] Maintain, update, coordinate and implement Helena's policy and regulatory documents.

Discussion: Cities are more likely to succeed when leaders and citizens come together to address a shared vision and set of objectives. This goal serves to affirm Helena's commitment to community planning and implementation. This Growth Policy is configured to aid periodic updates, and encourages future planning work by City departments, creating topical, parks or sub-area planning. Good planning – and just as important, implementation – is key to maintaining Helena's essential qualities over time.

Objectives

- [O.11] Seek and support opportunities to leverage Helena's rich open space and natural areas setting in promoting tourism and economic growth.
- [O.14] Support the development of housing located in proximity to necessary services and quality of life assets, including generalized physical, technological, social and economic infrastructure.
- [O.16] Support the preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.
- [O.18] Encourage maintenance of housing in an attractive, safe and sanitary condition, helping extend the service life of housing and enhancing the general appearance of the city and its neighborhoods.
- [O.31] Provide and maintain a full range of quality park facilities, open spaces and recreational opportunities for citizens of all abilities and age groups.

- [O.35] Work with Helena Public Schools to coordinate City parks, facilities and service planning with:
 - School facility plans;
 - School programs, recreational facilities and educational opportunities.
- [O.36] Maintain city parks and open spaces taking full advantage of applicable and developing technologies.
- [O.38] Encourage citizen involvement in crime prevention programs.
- [O.39] Develop and enhance a transportation system in Helena that:
 - Facilitates the safe, efficient movement of people, goods and services;
 - Supports non-motorized and recreational needs;
 - Promotes livable neighborhoods;
 - Supports the needs of Helena’s elderly, disabled and disadvantaged populations;
 - Improves safe pedestrian and bike routes;
 - Respects the area’s natural and historic context;
 - Improves and connects to regional transit systems.
- [O.44] Prefer transportation designs that:
 - Preserve natural viewsheds;
 - Are compatible with historic resources;
 - Minimize construction cut-and-fill on slopes.
- [O.56] Encourage use of technologies and techniques that direct light downwards, minimizing intrusive or excessive glare, reducing energy use and optimizing “dark sky” conditions in Helena.
- [O.57] Minimize cut-and-fills on slopes resulting from road or building construction.
- [O.60] Promote the planting and protection of trees citywide, helping:
 - Beautify and enhance community value;
 - Provide shade and comfort;
 - Affirm Helena’s association with the outdoors and its historic origins;
 - Provide wildlife habitat.
- [O.61] Promote landscaping guidelines that:
 - Maintain or restore native trees and vegetative cover;
 - Support locally-compatible species diversity;
 - Re-vegetate disturbed areas;
 - Beautify streets, entry corridors, roadways and parking lots;
 - Help calm traffic;
 - Help treat and address stormwater issues.

- [O.69] Work to preserve or mitigate potential loss of historic, cultural or aesthetically-significant features, boosting overall economic vitality, tourism and local quality of life, including:
- Landscapes and open space areas;
 - Skylines, sightlines and viewsheds on the City's south border;
 - Buildings, districts or objects of historic significance.
- [O.70] Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of buildings in the downtown.
- [O.71] Work to maintain Helena's downtown as the city's 'heart' and key focal point, combining commercial, civic, cultural, residential, and recreational uses.
- [O.72] Promote the economic and social vitality of historic districts.
- [O.73] Coordinate historic and pre-historic preservation issues with land-use planning and decision-making.
- [O.74] Work to improve the awareness, availability and access of cultural programs and activities for all Helena residents, including coordination of such activities with other agencies and community organizations.
- [O.75] Maintain support for the City of Helena's advisory committees.
- [O.76] Support land use patterns that:
- Promote compatible, well-designed development;
 - Foster the long-term fiscal health of the community;
 - Maintain and enhance resident quality of life;
 - Implement related master plans and/or facility plans.
- [O.80] Promote development of varied and compatible types of mixed-use neighborhood centers in Helena, serving to enhance neighborhood identity, address community need, and support more compact land use patterns.
- [O.85] Reduce functional and visual impacts of entry corridors and commercial development on abutting residential neighborhoods, considering buffering uses, design standards and other methods.
- [O.96] Encourage community involvement in Helena government planning and decision-making.

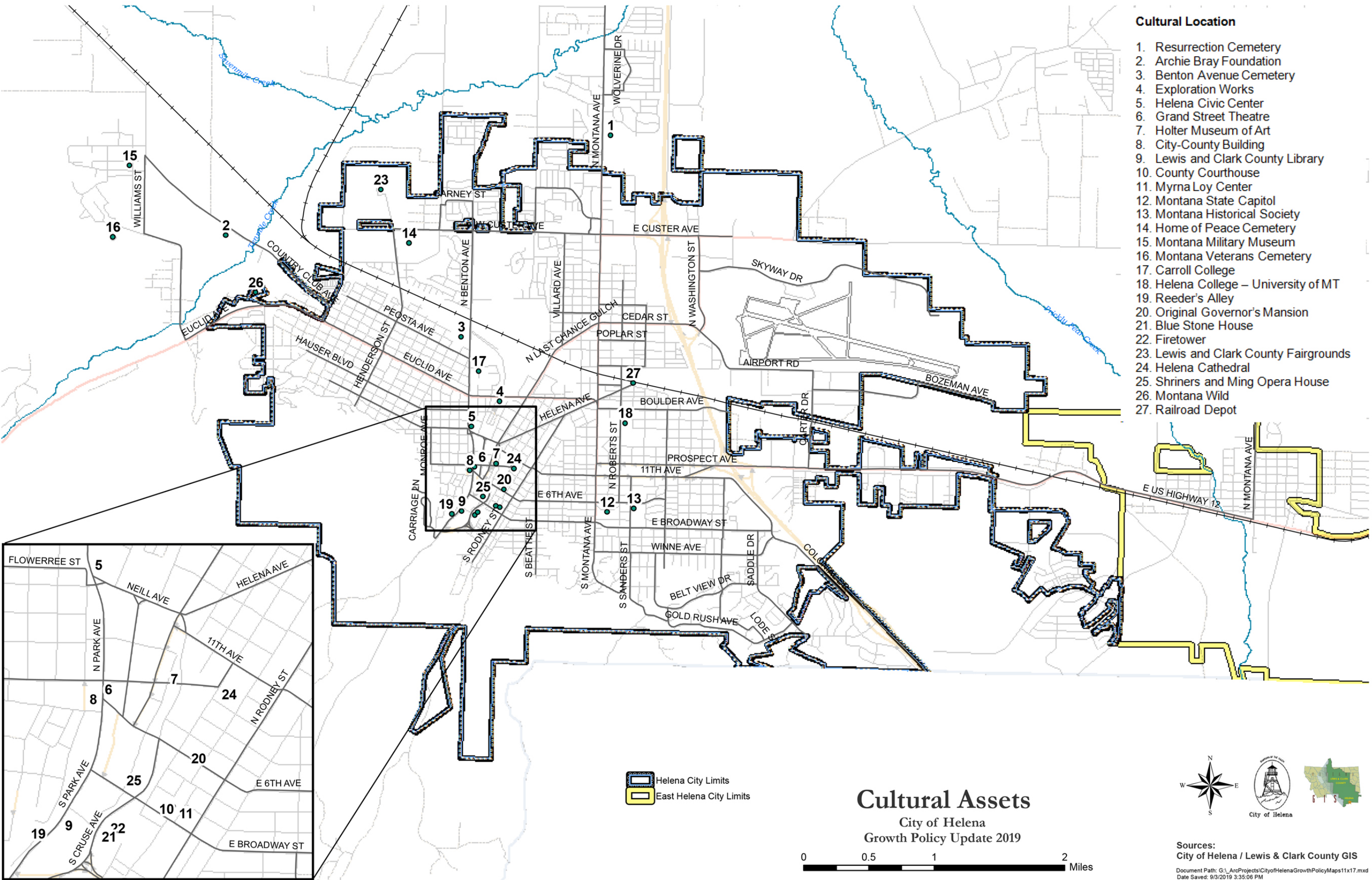


Figure 8.04 – Cultural Assets map (Image: City of Helena)

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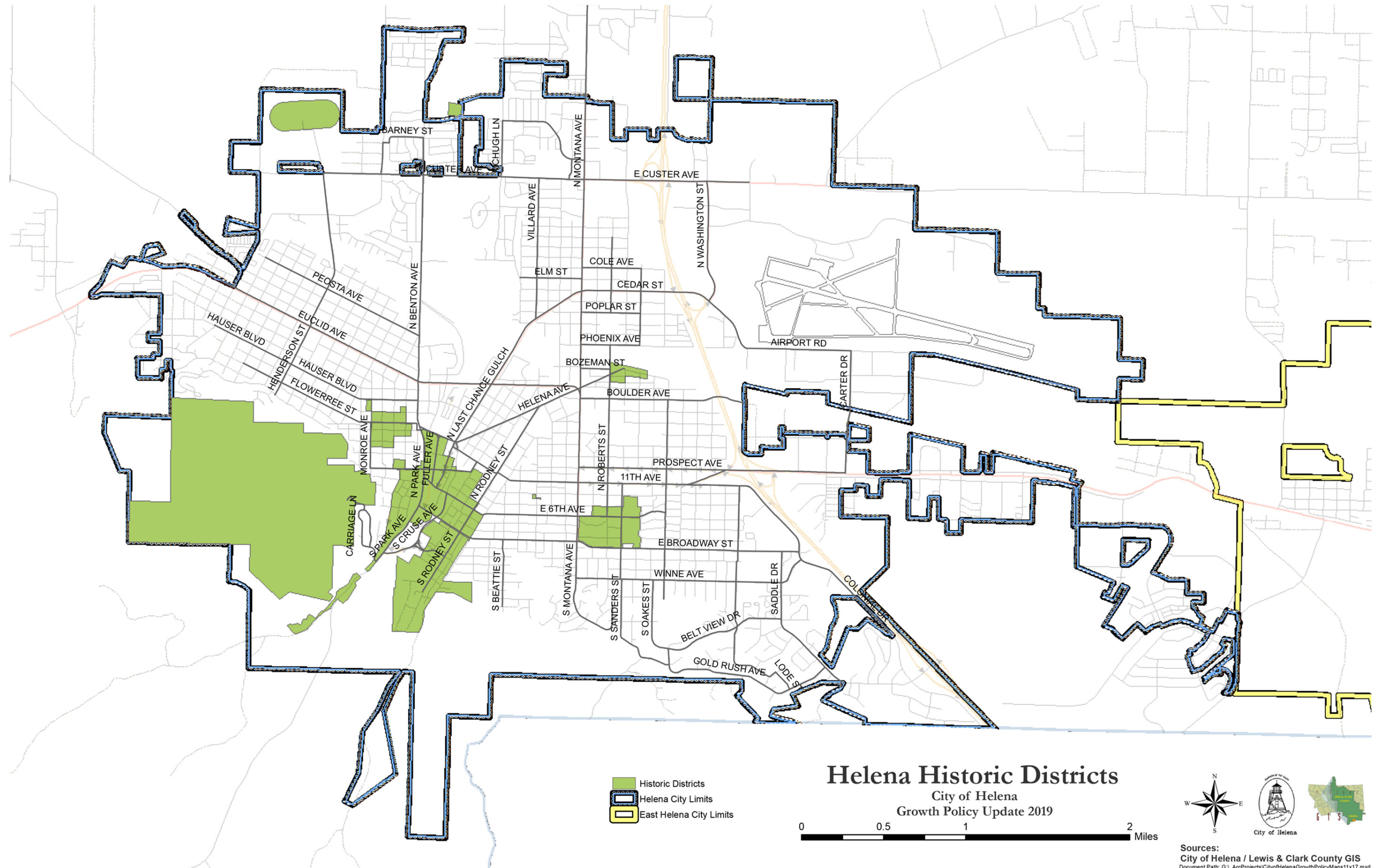


Figure 8.05 – Helena Historic Districts map (Image: City of Helena)

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